

Alliance Newsletter

Connecting and empowering the delivery of cancer care across our communities.

Issued Wednesday 11 February 2026

A message from our Managing Director



Welcome to our February newsletter – always an important month in the cancer calendar but this year it's especially significant with World Cancer Day on 4 February also seeing the publication of the National Cancer Plan, setting a bold vision for cancer care across England through to 2035.

We are proud of how much progress has already been made in our region. Over the past month alone, teams have celebrated major achievements – from reaching 50,000 lung cancer screening scans, to moving ever closer to reaching 100% coverage of teledermatology across our footprint.

We have also seen colleagues champion important initiatives, such as the University of Bristol's new Grand Challenge Programme, featuring Cancer as one of their key focusses.

These successes are the direct result of the dedication, innovation, and compassion shown daily by colleagues across SWAG Cancer Alliance. As we look ahead, the ambitions set out in the National Cancer Plan give us an exciting and challenging roadmap that we are committed to delivering together. We are now in the thick of planning as we come towards the financial year end - as we look ahead to 2026/27 and build our plan that will guide our work going forwards, we want to thank all of you for everything you continue to do to improve cancer care and outcomes for people across SWAG.

Best wishes,

Ruth Carr

Managing Director

National Cancer Plan



The new National Cancer Plan launched on World Cancer Day last week and it sets out a powerful long-term ambition: By 2035, three in four people diagnosed with cancer will be cancer-free or living well five years after diagnosis.

Key aims include:

- Becoming a global leader in cancer outcomes
- Delivering world-class cancer care
- Driving up NHS cancer performance
- Designing services around people's lives

With around 50,000 cancer diagnoses a year in the South West alone, these ambitions when put into reality make a huge difference to those experiencing cancer. SWAG Cancer Alliance is already delivering on a number of initiatives that directly accelerate earlier and faster diagnosis, and we want to recognise the incredible work already taking place across our region.

[Read more: How we are delivering on National Cancer Plan ambitions across SWAG](#)

Lung Cancer Screening hits 50,000 scans

At the end of January, SWAG Cancer Alliance reached a major milestone in its [Lung Cancer Screening programme](#), delivering 50,000 lung cancer scans since the service began in 2022.

To date:

- Over 145,000 people aged 55–74 (current or former smokers) have been invited
- Over 92,000 have attended Lung Health Check appointments
- Over 400 lung cancers have been diagnosed
- 76% detected at Stage 1 or 2



This milestone marks significant progress in improving early diagnosis and reducing inequalities in lung cancer outcomes across SWAG.

Last week, the SWAG Lung Cancer Screening clinical and operational team came together to discuss the achievements of the programme to date. The team discussed the delivery plans for the coming year, following the National Cancer Plan committing to 100% roll-out nationally by December 2030 and how we will continue to implement this successful service across SWAG.

[Read more: SWAG hits 50,000 milestone in Lung Cancer Screening scans](#)

Telederm to reach 100% coverage across SWAG

All remaining Primary Care Networks in Bath and Salisbury have now had their Expressions of Interest approved, with community imaging hubs being funded to support the skin cancer pathway.

Training for the new cameras is taking place next month, and both Bath and Salisbury expect to achieve 100% population coverage by March. Salisbury has already begun receiving referrals and images following its December launch.

This approach is already transforming pathways:

- Bath is discharging 40% of patients via remote assessment
- Dermatology capacity is increasing where it's needed most
- Unnecessary hospital attendances are reduced

The next step is to ensure all practices are fully aware of the option for patients to have images taken as part of the referral process and to fully utilise the new services.

Bowel Screening FIT threshold changes



NHS England is introducing a lower threshold for the bowel screening test (FIT) intended to detect smaller amounts of blood in stool samples. The test, offered to 50-74 year-olds, will improve diagnosis, catching potential cancers at an earlier stage when they are easier to treat successfully.

Our Medical Director, Dr Helen Winter, recently spoke on Greatest Hits Radio Wiltshire about updates to the Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT), including the new lower thresholds used to detect traces of blood in stool samples.

[Read the Greatest Hits Article here: Cancer expert urges people in the southwest to attend screening tests](#)

Jess' Rule: Reflect, Review, Rethink



It is great to see the posters around Jess' Rule now being offered to all GP surgeries across England. We strongly encourage all our partners to be promoting this simple measure that could make a huge difference to patients, potentially saving lives by avoiding missed or delayed diagnoses.

Jess' Rule really is as simple as it sounds: if a patient presents three times with the same or worsening symptoms or concerns, Reflect, Review, Rethink.

[Find out more and download the poster here](#)

Energise Programme open for referrals at Hengrove Park Leisure Centre



An exercise programme for people affected by cancer has opened up at Hengrove Leisure Centre in Bristol.

Energise is a 12-week exercise programme delivered by trained instructors - it is free for participants to join until 31st March 2027. It is open to all tumour sites and any stage in the cancer care pathway, for all residents across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

Participants will receive:

- An individual assessment with an exercise instructor with specialist skills in cancer and exercise for health
- Support from an instructor at every session
- Nutrition and wellbeing screening at the initial assessment to ensure all their needs are met

The referral portal is now open. For more information contact proactiveproject@nbt.nhs.uk.

[Access the referral portal here](#)

New BNSSG Funding Opportunities

There is just over a week left to get your requests in for the BNSSG Communities Against Cancer Funding Opportunities – open to all VCSEs with an interest in prevention and early diagnosis of cancer.

Open to all VCSE organisations, the programme offers up to £10,000 per project, supporting work that:

- Tackles cancer inequalities
- Boosts community cancer awareness
- Encourages uptake of cancer screening

Funded by SWAG Cancer Alliance and delivered in partnership with the Chinese Wellbeing Society, BNSSG ICB and Bristol NHS Group.



[Find out more: BNSSG Communities Against Cancer – Chinese Community Wellbeing Society](#)

New Research Study into the 'Causes of Delayed Cancer Diagnosis'

The Örenäs Research Group at [University of Bath](#) are running a study on 'Causes of Delayed Cancer Diagnosis' to find out what, from their own experience, people think are the main causes of delayed diagnoses.

The short survey is open to:

- Patients who have been diagnosed with cancer
- A relative, loved one or carer of someone diagnosed with cancer
- A primary care clinician who sees patients who could be presenting because of cancer symptoms
- Secondary care clinicians who see patients who could be presenting because of cancer symptoms

[For more information on the study and how to take part, visit: What do you think are the main causes of delayed cancer diagnosis? A questionnaire.](#)

Upcoming Training & Events

[SWAG Innovates Together - 12 February | 1pm - 2pm, Online](#)

Theme: Building the workforce and systems needed to deliver digital cancer innovation

Guest speakers:

- Holly Hall Hare-Scott, Senior Partner TPXimpact - User-centered digital transformation
- Rachael Barham, Programme Manager Health Innovation North East and North Cumbria - Preparing the workforce for digital innovation in primary care

[Register here: SWAG Innovates Together - 12 Feb 2026](#)

[The National Cancer Plan for England: Delivering World Class Cancer Care - 23 February | 10:00 - 11:00, Online](#)

This session will be a showcase of the commitments within the plan with a chance for Q&A.

[Register here: National Cancer Plan for England](#)

[The Genomic Research Forum for Nurses and Midwives - 26 February | 16:00 - 17:00, Online](#)

Develop your research Pillar of Practice.

[Sign up: Genomic Research Forum](#)

[The Importance of Early Cancer Diagnosis - 3 March | 12:30 – 14:00, Online](#)

Webinar for non-clinical primary care staff

[Register here: Importance of Early Cancer Diagnosis](#)

[Oral Lesions: Friend or Foe? - 6 March | 12:45 – 14:00, Online](#)

Clinical webinar for primary care clinicians across SWAG

[Sign up: Oral Lesions: Friend or Foe?](#)

Cancer Study Day Live - 25 March | 10:00 – 13:00, Online

Half-day course for ARRS roles (Pharmacists, Physios, Dieticians, Occupational Therapists) delivered by Red Whale

[Register: Somerset, Wiltshire, Avon and Gloucestershire Cancer SDL 24 Feb](#)

SWAG Innovates Together - 16 April | 13:00 – 14:00, Online

Open to anyone with an interest in cancer innovation

[Sign up: SWAG Innovates Together April 2026](#)



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